GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RAILWAYS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6591
ANSWERED ON:08.05.2003
SAFETY OF RAIL LINES
RITA VERMA

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the sole responsibility of providing safety to rail lines and rail passengers in the Jharia coalfield area where the underground mines are catching fire, lies with the Railways alone;

(b) if so, whether the Government have taken steps to protect the rail lines/rail passengers against the fire which has broken out in the underground mines;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) if not, the agencies which owe the responsibility of providing protection against the aforesaid threat;

(e) whether the Railways has taken any assistance from the Directorate of mines safety in order to provide safety to rail lines against the fire of underground mines in Jharia coalfields; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA)

(a): No, Sir.

(b) to (f): The safety of Railway passengers is ensured at all times.

Responsibility to provide safety to Rail lines and Rail passengers in Jharia Coalfield due to under ground mine fires etc.lies with the colliery authorities (under Ministry of Coal) and is enforced by Director General of Mines Safety (DG/MS) (under Ministry of Labour) for required protective and preventive measures against fire. Railway Mining SafetyWing situated at Dhanbad inspects regularly the condition of fires etc. under and adjacent to Railway lines and informs DG/MS andcolliery authorities to take necessary protective measures to prevent fire, so as to ensure safety of Railway lines and Railway passengers.

There had been a problem of underground fires in Jharia Coalfield area. Ministry of Coal had requested for constitution of a committee by Ministry of Railways with participation from Ministry of Coal and Mines, local Administration and Coal Mines Officials. Accordingly, a committee was constituted in June, 2001. Meanwhile the then Minister for Coal and Mines, Government of India, had advised in October, 2001 that Railways need not wait for the recommendations of the Committee referred herein and in view of urgency of the situation, close the line without any further loss of time, to eliminate danger to life and property. The committee has since submitted their report. In order to ensure safety, the committee's recommendation to suspend passenger traffic on Dhanbad-Patherdih line, has been accepted and implemented since July-02.

The Committee also made several other recommendations for extinguishing of fires and other preventive measures. These are to be acted upon by Ministry of Coal and Mines who have since been requested in July-02 and again in January-03 to take necessary action.